



NEWS RELEASE

INDIVIDUAL, TEAM EXCELLENCE RECOGNIZED IN ANNUAL PRESENTATION OF OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCE AWARDS FOR TOWN EMPLOYEES

Herndon, VA (December 9, 2021) – One person’s extraordinary effort to enhance safety for employees working at the Town Shop. A team working together to ensure the town was in compliance with COVID regulations and was mitigating risk of infection in the workplace. A comprehensive, wholistic approach to employee wellness at the Herndon Police Department, spearheaded by two newly-hired, command level officers.

These are the initiatives recognized with this year’s Outstanding Performance Awards, annual awards presented by Town Manager Bill Ashton to thank employees who go above and beyond in their service to colleagues and citizens. The awards were presented at a ceremony on December 7; while attendance was limited due to pandemic protocols, the ceremony was recorded for all employees to view.

“In this challenging year, the creativity and innovation demonstrated by these employees made our workplace safer, our employees healthier and our team spirit stronger,” Ashton said. “Often, leaders emerge in times of trial. Each employee recognized by these awards exemplifies leadership in the truest, best sense of the word.”

Each year, award nominations are submitted by town employees. Nominations are then reviewed by a panel of Herndon business owners and/or citizens; this panel determines award recipients in various categories. The 2021 awards were evaluated and determined by Martin Gruszka, owner of Herndon’s Office Evolution, providers of flexible shared workspace; and Miriam Liggett, owner of Soliloquy Bridal Couture in Herndon’s downtown. Award recipients receive up to \$1,000 for individuals and up to \$2,000 for teams.

The following Outstanding Performance Awards were presented in 2021:

Individual Excellence. Chris Mason, Operations Manager, Department of Public Works. At her own initiative, Mason conducted a safety and compliance assessment of town facilities, which identified issues that needed correction and/or repair. Her work significantly enhanced workplace safety and has established a template for ongoing safety review.

Team Excellence. Lindsey Jones, Systems Technician, Parks & Recreation; Chris Mason, Operations Manager, Department of Public Works; Roxann Fox Simkins, Risk Manager, Town Attorney’s Office; and honorable mention to Lesa Yeatts, Town Attorney. At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, town operations pivoted into emergency mode that, due to its unique challenges, was uncharted territory. While the roles and responsibilities of all town staff were impacted, these employees were on the front line in developing reporting systems, ensuring regulations were adhered to, keeping employees informed of protocols and – most importantly – mitigating the impact of the virus in the workplace and promoting employees’ health.

Innovation and Creativity. Lieutenants Jay Carson and Mark Dale, Herndon Police Department. Both brought on board in fall 2020, Carson and Dale were tasked with developing a comprehensive wellness program for HPD that would help officers coping with stressful incidents as well as contribute to overall

positive mental health. The resulting program, developed in just eight months, is multi-pronged and incorporates a contracted police psychologist, annual wellness checks, peer support teams, meditation training and a dedicated wellness/meditation room, development of diversion policies in lieu of discipline, and acquisition of a facility dog for the department. “These efforts have not only increased the opportunities for personnel to maintain positive mental health in an increasingly difficult and stressful profession, but it has enhanced our ability to remain safe,” said Chief Maggie DeBoard.

In addition to the Outstanding Performance Awards, Ashton also presented the Customer Service of the Year Award to Matthew Ordemann, utility equipment operator in the Department of Public Works, who went above and beyond his normal duties in assisting the Herndon Police Department with lighting during a crime scene. A new award category was presented for the first time in 2021, to Timothy Whetzel, Jr., also a utility equipment operator, who referred three successful candidates for town employment. David Higgins, utility work crew supervisor, was also recognized, for 35 years of service to the town. “The commitment and service orientation of our employees is exemplified in these outstanding individuals,” Ashton said.

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Photo, L-R: Timothy Whetzel; Lt. Jay Carson; Lt. Mark Dale; Bill Ashton; David Higgins; Matthew Ordemann; Chris Mason; Lindsey Jones; Roxann Fox Simkins

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